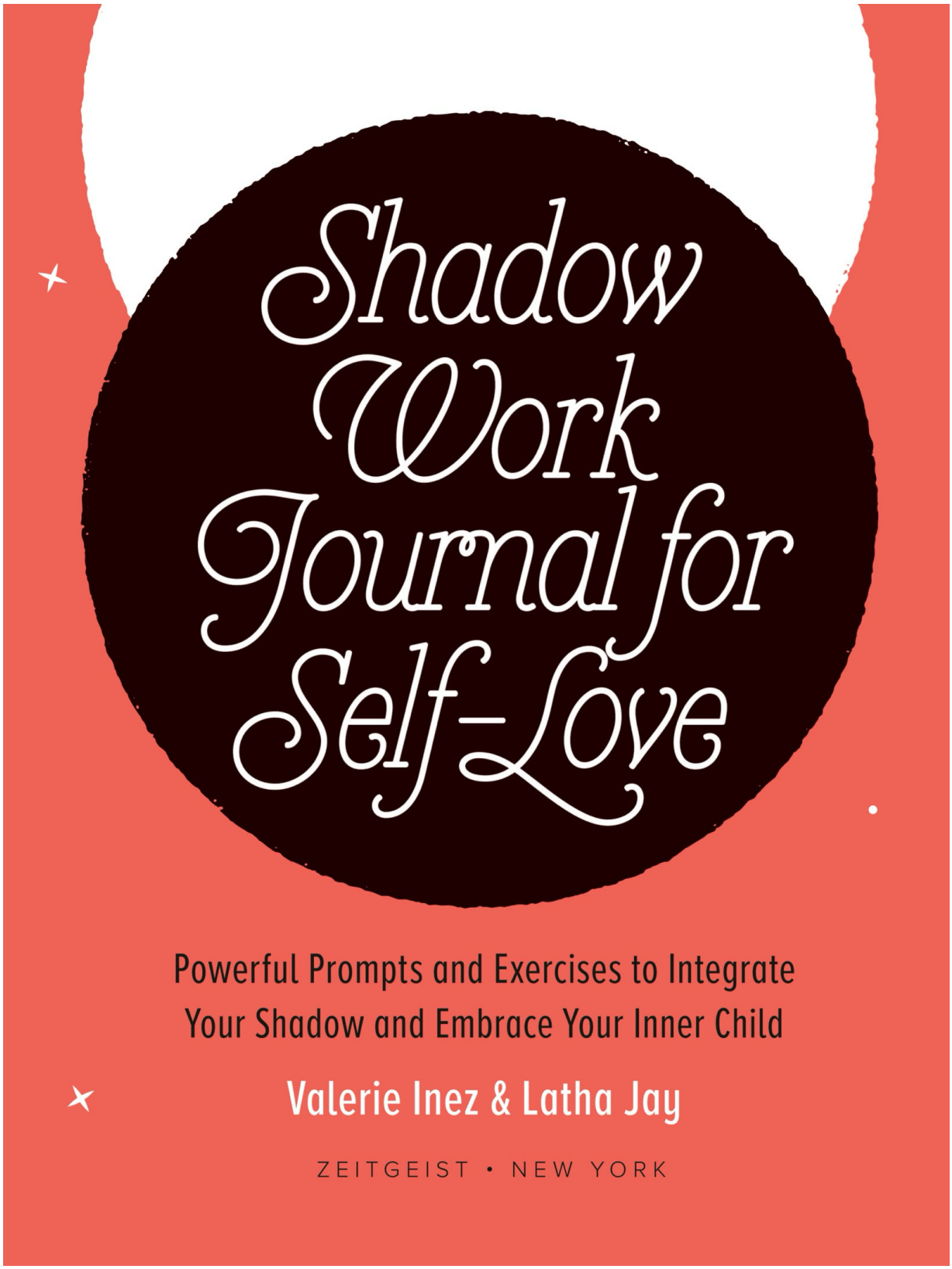
Shadow Work Journal for Self-Love

Powerful Prompts and Exercises to Integrate Your Shadow and Embrace Your Inner Child

Valerie Inez & Latha Jay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Valerie Inez & Latha Jay
ZEITGEIST • NEW YORK

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penguinrandomhouse.com

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ISBN 9780593690499
Ebook ISBN 9780593690291

Book design by Aimee Fleck
Author photographs © by Jessica Danae Photography and Valerie Inez
Edited by Clara Song Lee

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In loving memory of my father, Jay, whose belief in the things I could do was beyond my own vision.

—Latha

To my children. I chose to pursue the path of healing to give you the foundation you deserve.

—Valerie

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BEFORE YOU BEGIN

Shadow work is the process of uncovering the parts of yourself that you try to hide, deny, or reject and bringing them into your awareness. It's finding the root causes of what's holding you back and processing them so that you can heal old wounds and break repetitive cycles that no longer serve you.

What to Expect from Shadow Work

Engaging in shadow work can be challenging, but the journey is deeply rewarding. Step by step, you discover and observe the parts of yourself you once kept hidden. Over time, you learn to accept these parts and better understand who you truly are. Inevitably, this process shines a light on the root causes of deep emotional pain, invites profound healing, and creates more room for self-love.

When we talk about self-love, we mean the deep appreciation of self that comes from accepting yourself fully, treating yourself kindly, and supporting your growth and well-being. Self-love is taking tangible actions that nurture your mind, body, and spirit.

How to Use This Ebook

Begin by setting the intention to be gentle with yourself as you enter this uncharted territory. Shadow work can bring up triggers and intense emotions. It is vital that you work with compassion for your past and present self. If you struggle to deal with past memories, have a support

system in place, such as a close friend, a mental health professional, or a spiritual advisor. There is no need to be alone on this journey.

This ebook guides you through the work. You will need a separate writing space, such as a blank notebook, to deepen and reinforce this work through journaling. Chapter 1 lays the foundation to prepare you for your journey. The wide range of exercises in Chapter 2 helps you identify your shadow parts, observe them with gentle awareness, and begin the journaling process. Chapter 3 guides you deeper, using journaling prompts to help you get to know more of your shadow self.

Here are a few suggestions to help you get the most out of this ebook:

- Read Chapter 1 before trying any of the exercises and journaling prompts, and work through the Chapter 2 exercises before diving into Chapter 3.
- Follow your intuition. If an exercise doesn't resonate with you, skip it. If you want to jump around the journaling prompts in Chapter 3, that's okay. Use this ebook in whatever way supports you best.
- Create space in your schedule to do shadow work *and* give yourself permission to deviate when you need to. Listen to your intuition and internal guidance. If something feels too uncomfortable, stop. Take a break and revisit it later. There is no due date for completing this work, and you will not be graded. Knowing this, you are free to just *be*, and to allow whatever comes up for you to truly come up.
- End each shadow work session with at least one self-care ritual that grounds and centers you. This will help integrate the healing that should take place after completing your shadow work sessions. We

strongly believe that treating yourself with love, kindness, and compassion is a critical component of the shadow work journey, and self-care rituals comprise a big part of that.

Shadow work can be challenging, but it is worth it because you are worth it. Thank you for taking on this enormous task. You doing this work is a beautiful gift to *us*, the collective and the global community. We see you, we love you, and we appreciate you.

INTRODUCTION

We both came to shadow work during low points in our lives and have experienced firsthand how transformative this journey can be.

For me (Latha), shadow work started when I was hanging on by a thread to keep up appearances as a medical student. I woke up every morning feeling tired and deflated. I had spent so much time concerned about making others happy that I was miserable. Through shadow work, I began healing heartache from past relationships and breaking through self-imposed limits. I learned that my passion for helping people wasn't centered on the medical profession but rather on empowering people to better understand themselves.

For me (Valerie), shadow work began following my realization that I had difficulty managing my emotions; anger would often be my first reaction. I discovered that I was hiding a lot of sadness and felt uncomfortable in my own skin. When I started to do shadow work, I began to feel energetically lighter and got back in touch with my authentic self. It became easier to hear my own thoughts, and I found a connection to my intuition that I never had before.

Following our own experiences, we've guided hundreds of clients through this transformative process. Now we're excited to offer our support to you so that you can get back in touch with your inner light and truth, clear your energy, and remove limiting beliefs that prevent you from moving forward in your life. And remember, as we work on healing ourselves, we are actively working on healing the world.

1

The Shadow Work Journey

Shadow work has existed as long as humankind has been around, but it was popularized by psychoanalyst Carl Jung in the early 1900s. He wrote, “No tree, it is said, can grow to heaven unless its roots reach down to hell.” To know the depth of our roots gives us the stability necessary to reach our highest achievements and truly know “heaven,” our personal best life. This chapter lays the groundwork for you to look below the surface to discover the depth of your roots.

The Shadow and the Self

Understanding our shadows gives us a sense of control over them, and that gives us power. We no longer put energy toward suppressing them, which can be exhausting and damaging. Instead, we put our energy into getting to know ourselves and channeling that knowledge to various areas in our lives. This beneficial process is necessary for setting ourselves free. This exploration begins now.

Core Concepts and Ideas

The shadow self is made up of those parts of you that you subconsciously try to reject. It's in this space of rejection that your shadow self hides out. Your shadow self is comprised of those darker aspects (neither good nor bad) of your subconscious that remain hidden until you decide to consciously bring them to the forefront of your mind.

Your ego is the mask you wear that you consider your "identity" or your personality, which you use to thrive or survive in life. The tug of war you often feel within you is your ego challenging aspects of your shadow self, the repressed aspects of your identity.

Emotional wounds created during childhood can linger for a lifetime. It is in these moments of impactful events that we create an idea about ourselves. In the moment a child is ostracized by a classmate for fumbling during a speech, they might create and take on the idea that their voice doesn't matter, or isn't worthy of being heard. This idea can impact the rest of their life as they continue to reiterate it and believe it. It is in this

repeated belief that a shadow is formed. This shadow will linger and show up in their adult life as never speaking up for themselves such as in moments of injustice, not asking for the job promotion, and not pursuing the partner they truly love. When we are able to do shadow work and heal these wounds, we are able to create a new, more empowering belief about ourselves and change our life.

People tend to repress their shadow parts because they have a strong emotional reaction to them. We rarely want to identify with the feelings of guilt, shame, or regret, and these feelings are the core of our shadow parts. Long-term repressed emotions can pop up in so many other ways. Years of carrying stress can show up as disease, anxiety, and other chronic issues. Thankfully, understanding these parts can release the negative emotions and make the shadow self less reactive, thereby relieving unnecessary stress.

How the Shadow Impacts Our Life

The shadow shows up in your life through triggers, projections, and patterns. Let's take a look.

A *trigger* is a reminder of a past trauma that causes a fight-or-flight response. Triggers occur as the result of deep, unresolved wounds that manifest through emotions like anger, fear, and anxiety, or the inability to express emotions. Think of these as messengers that allow us to be conscious and aware of what needs to be addressed within us. When you're immediately and consistently triggered by the same person or experience, ask yourself, "What needs to be addressed within me at this time?"

The world is a mirror. You create *projections* when you misinterpret what is coming from inside of you to be coming from outside of you. This is

what's happening when you attribute traits or emotions you don't like about yourself to someone else.

Ever notice that it's the same stuff, but just on a different day? Same lousy boss at every job you work at? Different relationships ending the same way? These are *patterns*. We tend to create the same undesirable scenario repeatedly in our lives when we have not healed the pain behind it or when we have not looked closely enough to learn the lesson present in that scenario. Essentially, we begin running on autopilot when we allow our shadow selves to dictate our reality. This self-inflicted phenomenon is known among psychologists as "repetition compulsion."

Integrating our shadow happens one moment, one experience, one lesson at a time. It happens every time you have an opportunity to take a deep breath, pause, and reflect for a few seconds before responding to a situation. When we bring our shadow out into the light and accept it for who it is and how it contributes to our reality, our lives change for the better. This is called integration, and it happens when we truly accept and embrace all those parts of ourselves.

Shadow Work for Self-Love and Healing

Your shadow wants to be seen, heard, and accepted. Allow your shadow to emerge into the light and be healed. It is holding on to the wants and needs of your inner child, who desires to heal old childhood wounds; shadow work helps you love and heal your inner child. Connection between your shadow parts, inner child, and present human self helps you feel loved and accepted as a whole being.

We cannot "be the light" when holding another in the darkness, including ourselves. In other words, we can't be the light if we are holding aspects of ourselves in the darkness. However, the journey to self-love isn't always about "love and light." It's common to have ups and downs on this journey as you navigate your internal map. Some days may feel heavier than others, and that is completely valid. Surrender to the flow of these days and allow yourself to be fully present during this journey.

Shadow work offers you incredible healing, and through this healing comes strength. We feel better after we do this kind of work; we are better equipped and empowered to see our growth. Sometimes it's easier to think of healing a shadow in terms of a physical wound rather than an emotional one. You can only walk so far with a sprained ankle. When the ankle is healed, you can run.

Most importantly, healing looks different for everyone. There is no set timeline or hard-and-fast expectations to meet. However, healing—truly getting to a point of feeling better—takes self-dedication, time, and complete vulnerability with yourself. You are your own internal compass during this time and the only person who can measure your growth and healing.

How to Do Shadow Work

You can start doing shadow work anytime you feel ready or called to. Shadow work doesn't require any tools or materials to get started, but you can take several actions before you begin to make this journey more comfortable.

A Few Helpful Guidelines

Think of shadow work as a form of self-care. Set up the conditions to make this work comfortable and meaningful to you. Be sure to care for yourself before caring for others so you can show up to the outside world as the best version of yourself. Remember, this work primarily benefits you, but its wonderful results also benefit your loved ones.

Set aside time and space.

To begin, create a sacred routine that feels easy and natural. Set time aside in your day when you will be undisturbed to focus on shadow work. Grab a cozy blanket, light your favorite candle or incense, and find a comfortable spot. Dedicate this time for yourself to focus solely on this healing journey. We recommend an hour daily, but if you only get to fifteen minutes, that works too—make the most of what time you do have. Do what you can. There are no expectations other than those you place upon yourself. Be gentle and loving with yourself.

Trust in the power of mindful awareness.

When you begin to dive deeper within yourself, gradually developing an understanding of your shadow, you enter a state of mindful awareness. You become conscious of who you are and where aspects of your shadow have dominated your reality. With this awareness comes choice. You can choose to continue to allow your shadow self to remain unchecked in the darkness, or you can face it directly, send it love, and bring it to the light of your consciousness. Allow your shadow the space to exist within you, but also recognize that you are not the shadow. You are the awareness that *knows* when the shadow shows up in your experience.

Always practice self-compassion.

Self-compassion is just as crucial as awareness. When you treat yourself with compassion, you are able to get further in your shadow work journey. If you are having a hard time viewing your "bad" or "ugly" shadow parts without feeling shame, judgment, and/or guilt, remember that we all have these aspects. Your shadow is judged only by you. Release your self-judgment and replace it with love, forgiveness, and understanding.

Let yourself grow with courageous honesty.

Shadow work requires complete honesty with yourself, but that's not always easy. When you look at the work ahead of you, it might seem overwhelming and unapproachable. Please know that the fear of doing this work takes more energy than actually doing the work; fear is draining.

Once you step into shadow work, you will find your own flow that works for you, and the fear will disintegrate. It requires integrity to see yourself as a whole being and look at all parts.

You are not broken—nothing needs to be fixed. Shadow work allows you to live your life with more peace, freedom, and choice in all situations. This freedom comes with honesty, and the rewards are worth the temporary challenges.

When you are living in the self-created limits of your shadow, it crushes your ability to be truly who you are, in full self-expression, and you are constantly in a place of rejecting yourself. When you are repeatedly getting triggered, projecting your emotions, and repeating negative patterns, you are living a limited, exhausting life. Your journey's progress and success are worth the brief period of discomfort when facing yourself with complete honesty. On the other side is freedom.

Step-by-Step Shadow Work

Everyone's shadows are different, and everyone's journey to embracing themselves is unique. Shadow work activities and prompts may differ depending on where you look, but the general process of doing shadow work with this book may look something like this:

Ground and center yourself.

Grounding helps you be fully present within your body, connected to the security of the Earth and yourself. Grounding before engaging in shadow work can help you feel centered, balanced, and in a better state of mind. When you are grounded and centered, you are better able to respond to the world around you, rather than react to it. There are many ways to ground and center yourself to achieve a greater connection to self, such as meditation, spending time in nature, and doing yoga.

Journal with exercises and prompts.

Read the instructions and prompts, then take time to sit with them and let them sink in. You can choose to proceed with the prompts in the order they are currently structured or skip around, finding ones that appeal to you in any given moment.

There's no correct or wrong way to answer a question. What comes to you is what needs to flow in that moment. If you feel yourself getting stuck, try to write words that relate to a possible answer or even doodle for a moment. If you can't write sentences, write a list of words or phrases. Get as detailed as you wish, or keep your thoughts general if that feels more comfortable. You don't need to intellectualize what you are writing or try to label it.

Shadow work doesn't require you to intentionally revisit old memories or past traumas, but they may come up as you dive into a prompt. If you begin to feel overwhelmed by any memories that resurface, pause, take a deep breath, and ground and center yourself again. You are *here* now. If you feel overwhelmed or discouraged, give yourself space to feel and process these emotions. Seek support from a trusted friend, family member, or therapist.

It's important to allow yourself to feel and release any emotions that may come up. You are human, and feelings make up a significant part of our daily existence. However, if you do not have the capacity to continue a shadow work prompt because it feels too heavy, close your book and walk away. This is *your* journey! Maintain boundaries with yourself when you need to and also stay disciplined on other days when you feel able to do so.

Process and integrate.

It's important to check in with yourself and notice what's happening to process and integrate what's coming up. You must feel it to heal it. You can't go over it or under it—you have to go directly through the emotion and fully process it. When you go through an emotion, you are *growing* through it.

Keep in mind that there are no "good" or "bad" emotions. All emotions are completely valid, and learning to process them in a healthy way takes time. Allow yourself the space and time to deal with the emotions that arise and learn how to understand them. After years of suppressing some emotions, you may even find it difficult to feel any emotions at all.

Emotions are messengers offering us vital information on what action we need to take. Think of these as nuggets of inner wisdom that can offer

you guidance along your journey. Be curious with yourself as these emotions surface. Remember, there is no judgment here. This is your journey to inner peace and freedom. Pay attention to your emotional reactions, as these will be telling. Shadow work is a lifetime process. As we live, shadows are created, but with knowledge of this, we can process and integrate them as we go.

Conclude with self-compassion.

Self-compassion is vital to shadow work. While love and kindness should be present throughout the shadow work process, including an intentional moment of self-compassion as you finish the day's work can help you feel settled, complete, and clearer about what came up. However, even with the presence of love and kindness, you may leave a shadow work session feeling a bit angry, disappointed, or upset. It happens! We've been there. Spend some time resettling yourself by taking a few deep breaths, ground yourself as needed, and allow yourself to process any emotions you need to. Be compassionate with yourself for however you feel.

Supportive Self-Care Rituals

Supportive self-care rituals can help keep you engaged with your shadow work and connected to why you are cultivating more love for yourself, including your shadow parts. Self-care involves taking care of your mind, body, and spirit, because you are so deserving of it.

Connecting back to yourself through any of the following rituals allows you to reconnect with your heart and the entire reason you are embarking on this journey. We highly recommend using any of these self-care rituals to

ease some of the pain that may arise when uncovering your hidden truths and, in general, as you are finishing up a shadow work session.

Meditate to ground and center. Meditation can also help you process and release energy when you're feeling intense emotions or help you discern the cause of a trigger.

Connect with nature by stepping outside. Allow the sun to shine on your face. Listen to the world around you. Smell the scent of the earth. Gaze at plant or animal life.

Ground your energy by putting your bare feet on the earth or lying on the ground. This helps your body electrically reconnect you to nature and essentially resets your system.

Spend time with your animal companion(s). Interacting with your pets, if you have them, can ease anxiety and stress and encourage playfulness.

Enjoy life beyond the screen. Your phone is helpful in so many ways, but it can be a huge drain on your energy. Don't go straight to your phone following shadow work, and set up regular times to put your phone away for a bit to simply enjoy life.

Immerse yourself in music. Listen to your favorite playlist, dance, and sing. Singing is a phenomenal way to connect with your voice.

Eat something delicious. Food provides comfort, warmth, and love. Show yourself this kindness and enjoy something you love to eat. Take time to savor it, and express gratitude to the food for nourishing your body.

Play and have fun. Do something that makes you laugh or brings you joy. Remember what it feels like to be a kid again, fully present and immersed in moments that bring laughter and silliness.

Commit to setting healthy boundaries. Sometimes shadow work reveals the need for stronger boundaries. In such cases, make a commitment to set one or more. Visualize yourself setting the boundary or practice what you'll say to set the boundary.

Move your body in any way that feels good to you. Lift weights, go for a run, shake it out, or dance to your favorite music. Your body is an amazing machine that needs movement to release stagnant energy. Get your heart beating and blood flowing.

Take a nap or go to bed early. Sleep is vital to your emotional stability and joy. It's common to put it in last place because everything else seems more important. But to recharge, you need to sleep, so give yourself permission to turn in early or take a nap.

Schedule ME time into your weekly schedule. Take some time to prioritize yourself and plan to do something you really love to do, and commit to it.

Do some yoga. Yoga is a great practice to remind you that you are in competition only with yourself. It helps reconnect your mind and body by grounding and centering you.

Journal without your inner critic looking over your shoulder. Whatever you write is right. Let the words flow on the page. The practice called "Morning Pages" in which you free write, created by Julia Cameron,

encourages you to let words pour out of you each morning as soon as you wake up; you can also do this following a shadow work session.

Practice gratitude. Notice good things and appreciate them. Express gratitude to yourself. List five to ten things you are grateful for.

Organize something. Whether it's organizing your mail or beauty supplies, bringing order to something that is in disarray can help bring a sense of inner calm or relaxation.

Clean and cleanse your space. We are energetic beings interacting with other energetic beings, and this is no more obvious than when we are doing shadow work. Cleanse your space in whatever manner feels comfortable to you to leave it feeling peaceful and harmonious.

Take a relaxing bath. Sitting in a warm bath can be so grounding and comforting. Light a candle, fill the bath with bubbles, and sprinkle in some rose petals or whatever feels nourishing.

Learn something new. Read a few pages of a book that interests you, research a topic you are curious about, or listen to an interesting podcast.

Drink water. Staying hydrated lets your body function as it's meant to. Drinking water throughout your day helps everything move easier. After shadow work, it's an excellent way to feel refreshed.

Watch your favorite movie. Put on a movie that makes you laugh or gives you a sense of childhood nostalgia. Make a healthy snack and relax.

Change into something nice. Whatever dressing up means to you, do it. When we look polished on the outside, we shift our internal energy just a

bit.

Connect with others. Reach out to someone who loves you, someone who celebrates you rather than just tolerates you, and has the type of energy you want to be around.

State affirmations. Daily affirmations can shift your mindset by slowly reprogramming your subconscious. Have a few in mind to use following your shadow work session and throughout the day.

2

Exercises and Activities

The exercises and activities in this chapter help you access, process, and integrate your shadow self. Feel free to start with exercises and activities that feel most accessible to you, skip exercises that don't resonate, and repeat exercises you find particularly helpful as often as you'd like.

Mirror Work

Mirror work, a powerful practice in which you gaze at yourself in a mirror, is literally an in-your-face way to face your shadow. Limiting beliefs, fears, and doubts may surface, and aspects of your shadow may appear and repulse you. Be sure to treat yourself with compassion throughout this practice and after.

1. Sit or stand comfortably in close range to a mirror.
2. Look into your eyes for two to three minutes, and as you do so, repeat a compassionate affirmation in your mind or aloud. Motivational author Louise Hay encouraged saying "I love you" during mirror work. If that's too difficult, try "May I be able to love myself sometime in the future." Use whatever positive affirmation works best for you.
3. As you repeat the affirmation, notice what thoughts and emotions come up for you. Allow yourself to feel whatever comes up in that moment, and be present with it.

JOURNAL PROMPT: What thoughts came up? What emotions came up? How do you feel now? What, if anything, did you discover about yourself during this mirror work session?

Challenge Limiting Beliefs

Challenging your limiting beliefs, which are shadow aspects of yourself, is a powerful exercise to train your mind to choose a different path. Doing this consistently can significantly shift the way you think by helping your brain create new neural pathways, which supports your overall well-being and growth.

1. Draw three columns on a piece of paper. Title the columns "Limiting Belief," "How It Affects Me," and "Challenging Thought."
2. In the first column, list your limiting beliefs. Two examples are "Nobody could ever love me" and "I'm not good at anything."
3. In the second column, state how each belief affects you. For example, "Because I feel unlovable, it's hard to connect with people" and "I don't try new things because I think I will fail."
4. In the third column, challenge those beliefs. One way is to write the opposite of your limiting belief. For example, "I *am* lovable. When I show up as my authentic self, I attract people who love me" and "I *am* good at some things, and I can try something new without worrying if I will be good at it or not."

JOURNAL PROMPT: When you think of a limiting belief, where do you feel it in your body? Why do you think you feel it there? What emotions are associated with that limiting belief? How is the limiting belief connected to those emotions?

Write a Letter to Your Younger Self

Younger versions of ourselves often still live in fear and need to be seen, heard, validated, loved, and nurtured. You can connect with your inner child and bring healing to an issue through letter writing.

1. Think about yourself as a child. Identify a moment when you could have used some advice or help.
2. Begin your letter with "Dear Younger Self" or address a certain age or time period in your life—for example, "Dear Seven-Year-Old Me."
3. With complete vulnerability and honesty, write to that younger version of yourself. Offer the advice you needed to hear at that time. Share whatever thoughts your younger version could have benefitted from.
4. Describe how hearing this advice during that important time in your life would have changed things for you.
5. Express empathy for your younger version and close out your letter with love.

JOURNAL PROMPT: In what ways, if any, do you allow your inner child to freely express themselves as a loved and nurtured part of your being? Do you keep your inner child locked away in the shadow? If so, why? What might happen if your inner child was permitted full expression?

Dreamwork

Dreamwork, the process of writing your dreams down and exploring their meaning, helps you investigate the hidden shadow aspects of yourself. The more you do this, the easier it becomes to remember your dreams and learn from them.

1. Keep a journal by your bed. Set an intention to remember your dreams.
2. When you wake up, write down anything you remember.
3. In your journal, explore the following questions:
    - What recurring people, places, or events appear in your dreams? What emotions do they bring up? What might they symbolize?
    - Do your dreams offer a metaphorical solution to a problem or situation in your life? (Dream interpretation websites and books can help you here.)
    - What do the characters in your dreams represent? Which of their characteristics are important to you?

JOURNAL PROMPT: Describe a disturbing dream or nightmare. If the discomfort or fear in this dream or nightmare were real, what would you have to do to face it and move beyond it?

Fill in the Blanks

This exercise helps you explore what's been hidden so that you may live in more alignment with your true self.

1. Fill in the blanks with the *first* thought, word, emotion, or image that comes to your mind. There are no right or wrong answers.
2. At the end, read the entire paragraph back to yourself and notice what emotion(s) this elicits.

When I get upset or frustrated, I run to _____ to cope with how I'm feeling. If that is not readily available, I feel _____. I've been in this pattern of behavior for _____ years. When I was younger, I saw my caregivers _____ when they were feeling upset or frustrated. _____ brings me a sense of calm. I am tired of feeling _____ and _____. Instead, I want to try _____ to help myself when I'm feeling this way. Growing up, I was told _____. Hearing that for so many years has made me feel _____. This has impacted my life by _____. I am scared of _____. I know that I am worthy of _____ and _____. I deserve _____.

JOURNAL PROMPT: What patterns of behavior did you learn from your caregivers, family, friends, and/or society that don't add value to your life? How are you repeating those negative cycles?

Reflective Writing

This exercise allows you to sit back and reflect on certain aspects of your life in order to bring unseen emotions to the surface to be examined. By taking this moment to pause, untangle the sea of thoughts, and create a new meaning behind them, you can redirect your energy to take new action steps aligned with your future.

1. Ask yourself each of the following questions. Go in order, writing down your responses to each question in your journal.
    - What am I feeling right now?
    - What else am I feeling?
    - What in my life is causing me to feel this way?
    - How are these feelings currently impacting my life?
    - Do I wish to continue to feel this way? If not, what can I do to transmute these feelings and move through them?
    - Next time I feel this way, what is one thing I can do to improve my state of mind?

JOURNAL PROMPT: When you are feeling uninspired, confused, or lost, describe how you treat yourself. Are you kind or punishing? In what ways do you freely express yourself?

Be Creative

Children are natural creators, but, as adults, many of us push this creative nature aside for actions that produce something with outside value. In this exercise, you do not need to produce anything for anyone but you. Let your inner child be fully self-expressed. There are no rules or restrictions. You can even get messy. If you find this activity to be therapeutic, schedule time to do it regularly.

1. Set aside a minimum of 30 minutes to create something.
2. Think about the specific ways you liked to create and what brought you joy as a child.
3. Choose a creative medium such as clay, paint, markers, or pencils, and get your materials together.
4. Now, simply create whatever comes to you.

JOURNAL PROMPT: When you were a child, what did you most want to be when you grew up? How did dreaming of doing this make you feel? Why did this dream bring you joy? Consider the ways in which you create joy in your life. If you don't make time for joy in your day, what's stopping you?

Meditate

Meditation complements shadow work because it helps you create stability within yourself in the midst of outer and inner upheaval. While there is no goal in meditation, it assists you in responding to the world rather than being triggered by it. We don't meditate to get good at meditation; we meditate to get good at life. Meditation can be as simple as breathing; this particular one includes the use of a phrase or mantra for focus.

1. Find a quiet place to sit on a chair or the floor. Sit with your spine extended and with your head up as if you are balancing a crown. It is best to sit on a firm surface rather than on your bed or couch, where you're more likely to fall asleep.
2. Pick a short phrase or mantra that resonates with you and brings you peace. A great mantra to use is "so hum," which means "I am." It reminds us that we are so much more than just our shadows.
3. Set a timer for 10 to 20 minutes and close your eyes. The Insight Timer app is great for this.
4. Breathe normally and repeat your phrase or mantra in your mind's voice. As thoughts come to you, notice them without responding; bring your attention back to your phrase or mantra as often as necessary until the timer chimes.

JOURNAL PROMPT: What phrase or mantra did you select? Why does it bring you peace? During your meditation session, what

thoughts or feelings came up? What shadows are you currently addressing?

Write a Letter to Your Future Self

Addressing your future self allows you to send love, gratitude, and acceptance to that version of you, regardless of what you might achieve or accomplish. Use this as a moment to practice self-love now and in the future.

1. Begin your letter with "Dear Future Self" or address a certain age or period in your life.
2. Describe what's going on presently. What are you grateful for? What are your insecurities and worries? Be honest and descriptive.
3. Describe your current and future goals. Don't be hardwired to one specific path; instead, give gratitude to your future self for all they've accomplished. There are infinite possibilities your future version can take based on the actions you choose today.
4. Describe where you see your future self. In what ways are you different? What is your proudest accomplishment? Be mindful of any self-doubt, feelings of unworthiness, fear, anxiety, or pessimism that come up. Keep expressing love and gratitude for future you.
5. Read your letter aloud. How will your future self feel reading this?
6. Put your letter someplace safe. Set a reminder to read it, perhaps a year or more from now.

JOURNAL PROMPT: What resistance or doubt came up when writing and/or reading the letter? What steps can you take to align yourself with a more confident and empowered version of you?

Converse with Your Shadow

Your voice is your connection to the outside world. When you allow yourself to speak freely, you give yourself the freedom of uninhibited expression. Have you ever said or done something that felt out of character? That was a shadow part of you! This exercise allows you to connect with and understand those shadow aspects of yourself by having an inner conversation with your shadow.

1. Keep an open mind, and think of some questions you would like to ask your shadow. For example, think of a time when you reacted in a way that felt out of character for you. What aspects of your personality feel like they are difficult to maintain? You can ask your shadow any question you are curious about.
2. Now wait for an answer from your shadow. What comes to mind after you ask your question?
3. Keep the dialogue going between you and your shadow as long as you need to in order to obtain a clear answer.
4. Document the answers in a journal or voice recording. After bringing these aspects of yourself to the light of your consciousness, you can befriend and integrate these parts of you, instead of making them your enemy. Awareness is key!

JOURNAL PROMPT: What part of your personality are you hiding from the world? Do you show up as your authentic self or do you

put on a mask around certain people or environments? Why do you do this?

Mirror High Five

Author Mel Robbins came up with the "High 5 Habit" when she was at her lowest. It's about taking a moment to appreciate ourselves instead of immediately pointing out what's wrong with us or what we want to be different (for example, having too many wrinkles, not being thin enough, or having too many blemishes). When you step into your day by giving yourself a high five, it shuts up that judgmental voice for a moment and gives you space to direct your mind elsewhere. This might sound silly, but try it every day for two weeks and see how you feel.

1. When you wake up in the morning and start your day, look at yourself in the mirror.
2. With a pleasant expression on your face, give yourself a high five.

VARIATION

1. Tape a picture of yourself as a child to your mirror.
2. When you wake up in the morning and start your day, look at the picture and give it a compliment, send it love, blow a kiss to it, or give it a high five.
3. If you find yourself thinking something negative, look at the picture and ask, "Would I say such a thing to this child?" Send a kind gesture, such as a high five, instead.

JOURNAL PROMPT: List three things you love about your body and describe why you love those parts. How can you show your body more love?

Identify Your Triggers

When we identify who and what causes our triggers, it becomes easier to manage the way we respond when heavy emotions come up. When you can move past this trigger, that shadow aspect of you is no longer in control.

1. Choose one trigger to explore and respond to the following questions, while showing yourself kindness and compassion:
    - Who/what elicits that trigger within you?
    - How do you react when you experience that emotion? Do you shut down? Do you scream? Be specific.
    - How long has this triggered you? When was the first time you experienced this trigger?
    - Have you noticed any patterns with this trigger, whether from your past or watching other family members react this way?
    - What is a healthier way to manage your emotions when this trigger comes up?
    - How can you move through this feeling?
    - How would you respond differently if this trigger did not affect you?
2. Close this exercise by grounding your energy. Take a walk or run outside, walk barefoot in the grass, or do a meditation that helps you return to the present moment.

JOURNAL PROMPT: Are you holding a grudge or resentment toward a particular person or event? If so, describe it. How would

you feel if this resentment no longer affected you?

Criticize Others

Allow yourself to freely speak your judgments and opinions of others out loud in a safe environment. Do this alone so that you can be fully present with these thoughts without worrying about having to hold back. Speaking your criticisms aloud helps you gain a better understanding of where you judge other people as well as yourself.

1. Set aside 5 to 10 minutes of time when you can be alone and where you will not be overheard.
2. During this time, speak your judgments aloud. Be completely uninhibited during this process.
3. Bring to mind different people, groups of people, or types of people. For each, identify what you feel about this person, type, or group. What emotions arise for you? What criticisms do you have?
4. Now turn it around. Ask yourself if any of these criticisms or judgments reflect how you feel about yourself.

JOURNAL PROMPT: How does your judgment of others reflect the way you feel about yourself? Do you place judgment on your body, emotions, behaviors, and/or actions? If so, why?

Be Useless

Make time in your day to literally "be useless." It is not necessary to be productive one hundred percent of the time. Give yourself space and time to sit back and rest with zero judgment and complete compassion for yourself as a human being.

1. Carve out a time to be unproductive. This could be a day, a whole weekend, or a few hours.
2. At the appointed time, fully immerse yourself in the experience of being useless.
3. Allow yourself this time to rest, zone out, and chill. This part is completely up to you, so do whatever you want as long as it is not work-related or "productive." Keep in mind that the goal is to be useless.
4. If judgment arises about being unproductive, question that inner critic. What makes you think it's not okay to do nothing?

JOURNAL PROMPT: Describe how you feel when others are useless or you think they are not doing anything productive with their lives. In what ways do you honor your own energy and allow yourself time to rest and recharge?

Draw Yourself

It's time to access your creativity and create your self-portrait. Grab some paper and drawing utensils or your tablet with your favorite art app. You can also paint or use magazine cut-outs. Whatever method you prefer will work.

1. Draw how you look. Draw what you feel. Draw what you see when you look in the mirror.
2. To help you get specific, ask yourself questions like: *How does this person dress? How does this person behave? How does this person speak? What does this person think?*
3. Review your work as you go to look for any missing aspects of yourself and add them in however you'd like.
4. When you feel that the portrait is complete, assess your drawing. What does it tell you about yourself?

JOURNAL PROMPT: What parts of yourself do you allow to be fully seen and expressed? What parts do you try to hide away? How are these aspects of you illustrated by your self-portrait?

Quality Alone Time

Spending time alone is not only an amazing form of self-care, but it can also offer you a great way to face any triggers that bring up feelings of loneliness, abandonment, vulnerability, lack of self-confidence, being unloved, etc. Intentional time alone without any distractions from other people, outside noise, or conversations allows you to *really* see yourself. Use this time to tend to yourself and your needs.

1. Set aside time to spend quality time alone. You can schedule this in your calendar, pick a weekend night, or just show up for yourself whenever you feel ready.
2. Make plans with just you! Pick something you enjoy doing, like baking or cooking, gardening, taking a bath, or walking in nature. Your options are virtually limitless.
3. When you're spending this time alone, intentionally seek out elevated states of emotions. If you feel like laughing, do so with gusto. Or if you feel like you could use a good crying session, let it all out. This is not a place for judgment or self-hatred, but rather awareness of how spending time alone really makes you feel.

JOURNAL PROMPT: Where are you putting yourself last? Where are you showing up for your goals, wishes, and desires? How do you expect others to treat you? How do you treat yourself?

Be Physically Powerful

On your healing journey, it's key to find ways to set boundaries, protect your peace, and feel confident. If you find any of these difficult, engaging in physical movements that make you feel stronger and more powerful may be what you need to face aspects of your shadow that don't allow you to exhibit these empowering behaviors. This sense of physical protection will cascade into other areas of your life. Check with a healthcare professional if you have any limitations that should be considered.

1. Determine what kind of physical movements you would like to try, such as punching, kicking, pushing, or lifting weights. Whatever movement requires you to move your body in strong, powerful ways works.
2. Search YouTube or other online sources for videos that teach the proper form for these movements.
3. As you practice these movements, be fully present in your body and visualize yourself taking up space in the world and powerfully defending your boundaries and yourself.
4. As you move, notice any aggression, resentment, anger, reservation, or apprehension that shows up for you. Notice if these emotions affect your ability to participate in this exercise.

JOURNAL PROMPT: In what areas and with what types of people do you find it difficult to maintain boundaries? Describe what it feels like to be empowered and safe in your own skin.

3

Prompts for Deep Exploration

The journal prompts in this chapter help you explore your shadow parts and cultivate a deeper understanding of yourself, and can help you fall in love with yourself. Explore each journal prompt in whatever order you feel called to. There is no right or wrong way to explore these, so let your intuition guide you toward what needs to be addressed during your specific shadow work session. To get the most from these prompts, be deeply honest with yourself.

SHADOW WORK GOALS: What do you most want to get out of shadow work? In what ways will your life transform because of it?

ASKING FOR HELP: Describe how it feels when you ask someone for help. What about it is easy or difficult?

SEEKING SUPPORT: What types of people do you turn to for support? If no one can relate to your struggles, how do you feel about seeking professional help?

SOCIAL SUPPORT: Rate your social circle in terms of the amount of love and support you feel. Are you fully supported in these relationships or are there any weak bonds? How can you make changes?

AUTHENTIC SELF: How does it feel to be your authentic self around other people? When it comes to your closest relationships, which parts of yourself do you reveal or hide?

LOVE IT OR LOATHE IT: What types of people do you feel like you can truly be yourself around? Do they bring out aspects of you that you love or loathe? Describe how they help you be true to yourself, even if they bring out parts you don't like.

DISGUISES: Who or what groups of people do you wear a disguise around to feel like you fit in? What is your disguise covering up? Describe why you feel shame about these aspects of yourself.

SELF-ACCEPTANCE: Do you accept yourself for *all* of who you are? If not, what parts of you are too hard to accept?

INNER VOICE: Is your inner voice kind or critical? What does it say to you on a typical day? Who from your life does that inner voice resemble (parents, teachers, partners, etc.)?

BETRAYAL: When did you feel most betrayed? How old were you? Describe the situation and how it affected you.

BREAKING PROMISES: What's the biggest promise you made to yourself that you broke? Why did you break it? How do you feel about that? What might have been different if you had kept your promise?

BLAME: Describe a time when you blamed someone else for a negative outcome. What aspects of that situation might you have been partly responsible for?

VICTIM BLAMING: Do you blame yourself for a trauma that you experienced? If so, why? Did someone else blame you for it? What was their reasoning?

BODY POSITIVITY: How comfortable do you feel in your body? List your ten best physical traits. If you would like to change something about yourself, what is it and why?

BOUNDARIES: What is one new boundary you should set to safeguard your well-being? How will you maintain this boundary with yourself and other people?

CHALLENGES: What is the most challenging aspect of your life right now? What are you learning from it? How can you grow from it?

BRAVERY: Describe someone you think is brave. What makes that person brave? How can your own bravery help and inspire others?

HOLIDAY MEMORIES: What are your most prominent childhood memories of holidays? Would you categorize them mostly as positive or negative? Why?

NEEDS: What did you need as a child but never receive? Why did you need those things? Why didn't you receive them?

COMPARISON: Do you generally feel less than, equal to, or better than others? Explore this deeper by describing why you might feel this way.

VALUES: What's most important to you in life? What are you morally passionate about? Describe whether you lead your life in alignment with these values. Do you surround yourself with people who have the same values? Why or why not?

CAREGIVERS' VALUES: What did your parents/caregivers value when you were growing up? Do you hold these values today or do they differ? How so?

GRATITUDE: What are you grateful for? Think about the past few days and describe five to ten things that you were happy about or pleased with, no matter how small.

EMOTIONS: Which emotions do you avoid feeling most often and why? Which do you engage with the most and why?

FAILURE AND SUCCESS: What does failure mean to you? What about success? When was the last time you felt like a failure? When did you feel successful?

FACING FAILURE: Think about something you failed at and felt ashamed for failing. What made these circumstances so terrible? If you witnessed someone else fail at the same thing, what would you say to help them feel better?

FEAR: In what areas of your life are you playing small or functioning with fear? Why are you allowing yourself to do this? How can you shift this?

FORGIVENESS: Without reaching out to this person, think of someone from your past whom you can forgive. Remember, forgiveness does not mean you approve of anything they did or didn't do. What would you say to that person to free yourself of resentment?

SELF-DEPRECATION: What is the worst thing you have ever said to yourself? How can you make up for it? What acts of self-love can you implement into your life?

SELF-FORGIVENESS: What is one thing you need to forgive yourself for? Why have you been holding on to this? How would you feel if you released this shame or guilt?

INHERITED TRAITS: What are the worst traits you've noticed in your family? What are the best? Describe how these traits make you feel. Do you share these traits?

INJUSTICE: Do you speak up in the face of injustice or confrontation? Why or why not? How would it feel to do the opposite?

DEALING WITH HURT: How have you dealt with negative life events and painful experiences? What have you done about it? What would you change about how you deal with pain in the future?

UNANSWERED QUESTIONS: What is a question you had as a child that you never got a real answer to? Do you still wonder about this? What would happen if you had the answer? Would this bring a sense of closure? Why or why not?

LONELINESS: Describe the time when you felt the most alone as well as the time when you felt most connected. What's similar and/or different about these instances?

LOVE: What is your definition of love? Do you show yourself this kind of love? If not, describe your own version of self-love.

SELF-LOVE: In what area of your life do you not treat yourself with love? Why is that? How would a person who loves themselves treat themselves?

MENTAL HEALTH: What are the first things you notice about yourself when you realize that your mental health is struggling? How do you support yourself at these times?

MISCONCEPTIONS: What misconception do people have about you? How does that make you feel? Why do you think they see you that way?

MISUNDERSTANDINGS: What might you misunderstand about how certain people behave toward you? What other reasons could there be for their behaviors?

SELF-WORTH: Describe how status and income affect your sense of self-worth. If finances do not play a part, what else brings you a sense of self-worth and how can you enhance those positive feelings?

MONEY: How did your family's relationship with money impact your view of making, spending, and saving money? Is your perspective aligned with scarcity or abundance? If scarcity, how might you change that?

SPECIAL TREATS: What was the last thing you purchased for yourself just because you wanted it? How did the purchase make you feel? If you could buy anything you wanted, what would it be?

FINANCIAL SECRETS: Should people be open about the amount of money they make? Why or why not? Did your parents/caregivers keep their income a secret from you and/or others? How has this impacted how open you are with finances?

MONEY SHAME: Do you believe there is shame in admitting that you want or need more money? If so, describe why the thought of not having enough money makes you feel ashamed.

MONEY TRANSPARENCY: Write about a time when you wanted to "show" someone that you had money (or that you don't have enough and are struggling). Did you want to flaunt this or just allude to it? Why did you feel compelled to do this?

NEGATIVE THOUGHTS: What negative thoughts are you feeding your subconscious? What is the source of each of these thoughts? Brainstorm some positive thoughts to replace them.

PAINFUL EMOTIONS: How does it feel to allow yourself to experience painful emotions? Describe any resistance around processing your emotions and experiences.

PEOPLE PLEASING: Are you a people pleaser? In what ways do you show up for others but not for yourself? Why do you do this?

SELF-CARE: Describe how you take care of yourself. When you take this time for yourself, how do you feel before, during, and after?

POSITIVE FEELINGS: Write in detail about the people, experiences, and commitments that triggered positive feelings, energy, and emotions for you in the last twelve months.

REGRETS: Imagine for a moment that you are at the end of your life. What is your biggest regret? Brainstorm ways in which you can address change so you no longer anticipate these regrets.

RELATIONSHIP BOUNDARIES: Do you have healthy boundaries in your relationships? Which could benefit from stronger boundaries? Describe how you do or don't respect the boundaries of others.

UNKIND BEHAVIOR: When was the last time you were mean or hurtful? Why did you behave that way? Did you do anything to shift this? What can you do today to make someone smile?

RELATIONSHIP RELEASE: Which relationships in your life no longer serve you? What would happen if you released these relationships?

LETTING GO: What thought, belief, behavior, situation, and/or physical object is no longer serving you? Are you willing to release it? Why or why not?

REPARENTING: In what ways can you reparent yourself today? In other words, how can you meet the needs of your inner child that weren't met when you were growing up? How would your younger self feel if they had received this same treatment?

REPLENISHMENT: What do you need to do to replenish yourself? How do you recover after a hard day at work? After getting physically hurt? After an argument?

RESPONSIBILITY: In what ways are you being mature and responsible in your healing and growth journey?

VULNERABILITY: Do you allow yourself to be vulnerable in your relationships? Why or why not? How vulnerable are you in your romantic relationship? What about your friendships?

PUTTING YOURSELF FIRST: In what ways are you putting yourself last? Why? What does putting yourself first look like? What would happen if you did that?

SELF-IMPROVEMENT: What aspects of yourself would you like to improve and why? Has anyone ever suggested that you should try to improve in this area? If so, how did that make you feel?

SELF-KINDNESS: In what ways have you been punishing yourself? Brainstorm ways to be kinder to yourself.

UNWORTHY OF LOVE: Do you feel unworthy of being loved by others and/or yourself? What steps can you take to give yourself a healthy sense of self-worth? How would life be different if you felt worthy?

SEXUALITY: Do you embrace yourself as a sexual being or are you embarrassed by your sexuality or desires? Explain why.

SHAME: What times have you felt most ashamed in your life? What caused the shame?

UNWANTED TRAITS: What do you think are the worst traits a person can have? Can you think of a time when you have demonstrated these traits?

TOXIC BEHAVIORS: In what situations are you overly negative or manipulative? Where do you stir up drama? Describe the last time you expressed any type of toxic behavior in your close relationships and how the outcome made you feel.

TRIGGER STATEMENTS: What is one statement someone could say to you that would instantly set you off, causing you to react in a negative way? Why does this statement have this effect on you?

TRIGGER QUALITIES: What common qualities are shared by the people, situations, or things that trigger you? Do you share any of these qualities? Remember, we are only bothered by something if it is part of our shadow.

WEAKNESS: What makes you feel weak? Is it asking for help, being unable to meet a goal, or something else? Brainstorm the initial source of this feeling.

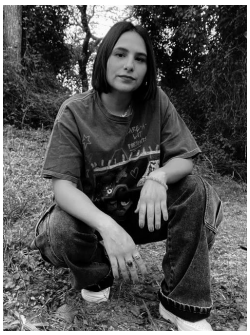
LESSONS ABOUT YOU: Who taught you about who you are as you were growing up? Does this resonate with how you feel about yourself today?

WORTHINESS: What regularly triggers feelings in you that you are "not good enough" or that cause you to feel less than others? Why do you think this is?

NEGATIVE EVENTS: In what way might past negative events affect your current relationships? What steps can you take to rectify this and approach your relationships with a more positive outlook?

FUTURE YOU: What are you creating for your future self? How much money do you want to earn? What would your most intimate relationship look like? What type of environment will you be living in? What do the supportive relationships around you feel like?

ABOUT THE AUTHORS



VALERIE INEZ is a Houston-based writer, intuitive, healer, and shadow work guide. As a Scorpio, she is comfortable diving deep into the shadows to bring the darkness into the light. She helps her clients rise from the ashes, find their inner magic, and step into their divine power. Valerie enjoys reading, writing, spending time with her children, exploring nature, and finding new ways to connect to the Universe.

LATHA JAY is a spiritual manifestation coach who blends modern knowledge with traditional wisdom. She integrates what she has learned through life experiences into various healing modalities to teach people to shift perceptions, manifest, and live happier lives. She is passionate about guiding clients through lifestyle and mindset modifications to transform their lives into a new experience of happiness, freedom, and love. When not working with clients, writing, spending time with her family, or building courses, Latha spends her days learning from others, farming, and persistently maintaining a beginner's mindset in everything she does.

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